

CLAIMS:

1 1. A method for storing and retrieving advance directives with a database
2 coupled to a communications system, comprising the steps of:

3 on the initiative of a service provider, registering and storing information
4 about the service provider on the database in anticipation of future creation of
5 advance directives that will come into at least the temporary possession of the
6 service provider;

7 storing on the database information supplied by the service provider
8 about a person and the person's advance directive; and

9 automatically transmitting upon request by the service provider informa-
10 tion about one or more advance directives that were stored in the database by
11 the service provider.

1 2. A method according to claim 1 comprising:

2 granting a request for automatic transmission of information about a
3 specific advance directive made by a requester other than the service provider
4 that supplied information about that specific advance directive if the requester
5 has been previously recorded in the database as being a qualified member of a
6 predefined common network that includes the requester and the service
7 provider.

1 3. A method according to claim 2 comprising the step of:

2 prerecording in the database, classifications for members of the
3 predefined network, the step of granting a request if the requester is part of the
4 predefined network being performed by determining if the requester is classified
5 in the database as qualified to have requests for advance directives granted.

1 4. A method according to claim 3 wherein the step of prerecording
2 classification is performed by:

3 listing members of the predefined network in the database with a class

4 designation signifying individualized membership privileges, said privileges being
5 settable to include: (a) obtaining advance directives; and (b) recording advance
6 directives in the database.

1 5. A method according to claim 4 wherein said individual membership
2 privileges being settable to include: (a) creating reports on activity in, or status
3 of, the predefined network; and (b) access to advance directives stored by
4 members in a predetermined group of class designations.

1 6. A method according to claim 2 comprising the step of:
2 obtaining authorization from a registrant to store and release information
3 about an advance directive executed by the registrant to a specified class of
4 entities; and
5 storing on the database information supplied by the registrant about the
6 registrant's advance directive; and
7 granting a request from one of the specified class of entities for
8 automatic transmission of information about the registrant's advance directive.

1 7. A method according to claim 2 wherein the person is a hospital patient
2 of the service provider, the step of storing on the database comprises the steps
3 of:

4 providing to the person, through the service provider, information about
5 advance directives; and
6 obtaining possession of the advance directive from the person before
7 performing the step of storing on the database information supplied by the
8 service provider about the person and the person's advance directive.

1 8. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of storing on the
2 database comprises the steps of:
3 providing to the person, through the service provider, information about
4 advance directives; and

5 obtaining possession of the advance directive from the person before
6 performing the step of storing on the database information supplied by the
7 service provider about the person and the person's advance directive.

1 9. A method according to claim 8 wherein the step of automatically
2 transmitting information is performed by downloading information from the
3 database over a global network.

1 10. A method according to claim 8 wherein the step of automatically
2 transmitting information is performed by either (a) downloading information from
3 the database over a global network; or (b) facsimile transmission of information
4 from the database over a telephone network.

1 11. A method according to claim 10 comprising the step of:
2 prerecording on the database a facsimile telephone number associated
3 with the service provider to be used when transmitting information from the
4 database to the service provider.

1 12. A method according to claim 11 wherein the step of automatically
2 transmitting information is performed in response to requests sent either (a)
3 over a global network using a browser, or (b) over a telephone network using
4 a telephone to respond to verbal prompts sent by the communications system.

1 13. A method according to claim 10 wherein the step of storing on the
2 database is performed by scanning the person's advance directive and storing
3 a digital image produced thereby on the database.

1 14. A method according to claim 10 comprising the step of:
2 automatically transmitting upon request by a third party other than the
3 service provider information about one or more advance directives that were
4 stored in the database by the service provider, provided the identity of said third

5 party is recorded in the database and provided such transmission is in accord
6 with predetermined transmission rules.

1 15. A method according to claim 1 comprising the step of:
2 prerecording in the database a roster of staff members of the service
3 provider with a level designation signifying individualized authority levels, said
4 authority levels being settable to include: (a) obtaining advance directives, (b)
5 recording advance directives in the database, and (c) creating status and activity
6 reports from information in the database.

1 16. A method according to claim 1 comprising the step of:
2 granting a request for automatic transmission of information about a
3 specific advance directive made by a requester other than the service provider
4 that supplied information about that specific advance directive if the specific
5 advance directive has been recorded with a notation signifying that an
6 applicable jurisdiction requires release of the specific advance directive in
7 response to properly made requests.

1 17. A method according to claim 1 comprising the steps of:
2 granting a request for automatic transmission of information about a
3 specific advance directive made by a requester other than the service provider
4 that supplied information about that specific advance directive if (a) the specific
5 advance directive has been recorded with a notation signifying that an
6 applicable jurisdiction requires release of the specific advance directive in
7 response to properly made requests, or (b) the requester has been previously
8 recorded in the database as being a qualified member of a predefined common
9 network that includes the requester and the service provider.

1 18. A method according to claim 17 comprising the step of:
2 in instances where the requester will be denied automatic transmission
3 of information about the specific advance directive, notifying the requester of

4 the existence in the database of information about the specific advance directive
5 and how to obtain information about it.

1 19. A method according to claim 1 comprising the steps of:

2 granting a request for automatic transmission of information about a
3 specific advance directive made by a requester other than the service provider
4 that supplied information about that specific advance directive if (a) the specific
5 advance directive has been recorded in the database with a notation signifying
6 that an applicable jurisdiction requires release of the specific advance directive
7 in response to properly made requests, (b) the requester has been previously
8 recorded in the database as being a qualified member of a predefined common
9 network that includes the requester and the service provider, or (c) the specific
10 advance directive has been recorded in the database with a notation signifying
11 that it can be released if the requester has been granted entry to a list of
12 qualified recipients recorded in the database.

1 20. A system for storing and retrieving advance directives comprising:

2 a communications system; and

3 a database coupled to said communications system, said database being
4 arranged to register and store information about a service provider in
5 anticipation of future creation of advance directives that will come into at least
6 the temporary possession of the service provider, said database being arranged
7 to store information supplied by the service provider about a person and the
8 person's advance directive, said communications system being operable in
9 response to a request by the service provider to automatically transmit informa-
10 tion about one or more advance directives that were stored in the database by
11 the service provider.

1 21. A system according to claim 20 wherein the database is arranged to
2 store a table of members of a predefined common network, the communications
3 system being operable to automatically transmit information about a specific

4 advance directive made by a requester other than the service provider that
5 supplied information about that specific advance directive if the requester and
6 the service provider are members of the predefined common network, with the
7 requester having been previously recorded in the database as a qualified one of
8 the members of the predefined common network.

1 22. A system according to claim 21 wherein the database is prerecorded
2 with classifications assigned to members of the predefined network, the
3 communications system being operable to automatically transmit information if
4 the requester is classified in the database as qualified to receive advance
5 directives.

1 23. A system according to claim 22 wherein the database is arranged
2 with a table of members of the predefined network with a class designation
3 signifying individualized membership privileges, said privileges being settable in
4 the database to include: (a) obtaining advance directives; and (b) recording
5 advance directives in the database.

1 24. A system according to claim 23 wherein said individual membership
2 privileges being settable in the database to include: (a) creating reports on
3 activity in, or status of, the predefined network; and (b) access to advance
4 directives stored by members in a predetermined group of class designations.

1 25. A system according to claim 21 wherein the database has some of
2 its records marked to signify open access to health care providers, said
3 communications system being operable in response to a request from a health
4 care provider to automatically transmit information about advance directives
5 marked for open access.

1 26. A system according to claim 20 wherein the communications system
2 is operable to download from the database onto a global network information

3 requested by the service provider.

1 27. A system according to claim 20 wherein the communications system
2 is operable in response to requests from the service provider to either (a)
3 download information from the database over a global network, or (b) facsimile
4 transmit information from the database over a telephone network.

1 28. A system according to claim 27 wherein the database is prerecorded
2 with a facsimile telephone number associated with the service provider and to
3 be used when transmitting information from the database to the service
4 provider.

1 29. A system according to claim 28 wherein the communications
2 network is operable to automatically transmit information in response to
3 requests sent either (a) over a global network using a browser, or (b) over a
4 telephone network using a telephone to respond to verbal prompts sent by the
5 communications system.

1 30. A system according to claim 27 wherein the database is arranged to
2 store scanned digital images of the person's advance directive.

1 31. A system according to claim 27 wherein the database is arranged to
2 store the identity of one or more third parties, said communications system
3 being operable to automatically transmit upon request by one of the third parties
4 other than the service provider information about one or more advance
5 directives that were stored in the database by the service provider, provided the
6 identity of said third party is recorded in the database and provided such
7 transmission is in accord with predetermined transmission rules stored on the
8 database.

1 32. A system according to claim 20 wherein the database is prerecorded

2 with a roster of staff members of the service provider with a level designation
3 signifying individualized authority levels, said authority levels being settable to
4 include: (a) obtaining advance directives, (b) recording advance directives in the
5 database, and (c) creating status and activity reports from information in the
6 database.

1 33. A system according to claim 20 wherein the communications system
2 is operable to automatically transmit information about a specific advance
3 directive made by a requester other than the service provider that supplied
4 information about that specific advance directive if the specific advance
5 directive has been recorded in the database with a notation signifying that an
6 applicable jurisdiction requires release of the specific advance directive in
7 response to properly made requests.

1 34. A system according to claim 20 wherein the communications system
2 is operable to automatically transmit information about a specific advance
3 directive made by a requester other than the service provider that supplied
4 information about that specific advance directive if (a) the specific advance
5 directive has been recorded with a notation signifying that an applicable
6 jurisdiction requires release of the specific advance directive in response to
7 properly made requests, or (b) the requester has been previously recorded in the
8 database as being a qualified member of a predefined common network that
9 includes the requester and the service provider.

1 35. A system according to claim 34 wherein the communications system
2 is operable in instances where the requester will be denied automatic
3 transmission of information about the specific advance directive, to notify the
4 requester of the existence in the database of information about the specific
5 advance directive and how to obtain information about it.

1 36. A system according to claim 20 wherein the communications system

2 is operable to automatically transmit information about a specific advance
3 directive in response to a request by a requester other than the service provider
4 that supplied information about that specific advance directive if (a) the specific
5 advance directive has been recorded in the database with a notation signifying
6 that an applicable jurisdiction requires release of the specific advance directive
7 in response to properly made requests, (b) the requester has been previously
8 recorded in the database as being a qualified member of a predefined common
9 network that includes the requester and the service provider, or (c) the specific
10 advance directive has been recorded in the database with a notation signifying
11 that it can be released if the requester has been granted entry to a list of
12 qualified recipients recorded in the database.